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ABSTRACT

The University of Southern California Norris Medical Library uses audiovisual methods for shelver training and detailed work assignment sheets in conjunction with shelver supervision. The slide/script training series serves both as a time-saving device for the shelver supervisor and as an effective and interesting instructional device. The work assignment sheets, with the aid of shelving calculation chart, enable the supervisor to give realistic assignments without having to give instructions orally. (Author/LS)

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Training and Supervision of Library Shelvers

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a program, prepared at the University of Southern California Norris Medical Library, which utilizes audiovisual methods for shelver training and detailed work assignment sheets in conjunction with shelver supervision. The slide/script training series serves both as a time-saving device for the shelver supervisor and as an effective and interesting instructional device. The work assignment sheets, with the aid of a shelving calculation chart, enable the supervisor to give realistic assignments without having to give instructions orally.

THE fast and accurate return of material to library shelves is clearly an important aspect of good library service, but little attention has been devoted in the literature to the training and supervision of shelvers. It is the purpose of this article to describe a program, prepared and utilized at the Norris Medical Library, which employs audiovisual methods for shelver training and detailed work assignment sheets in conjunction with shelver supervision.

The library's Loan Services section employs five to six part-time students (2.77 FTE); they devote 90% of their time to shelving activities and work at the loan desk 10% of the time. The Loan Services librarian oversees the activities of the other members of the department, but the immediate supervision of the shelvers is handled by the Loan Services supervisor. Under her direction, approximately 12,400 books and journals are shelved each month.

Shelver Recruitment

In recruiting shelvers, the supervisor seeks bright, conscientious individuals who have flexible schedules and are willing to work in the evenings and on weekends. Although these requirements are most often met by college students, the library is rarely able to hire students from the health sciences campus upon which it is located. These health sciences students are generally unable to take on part-time employment because of the heavy demands made by their academic studies and their training at the neighboring Los Angeles County/University of Southern California Medical Center.

The library therefore fills most of its shelving positions with students attending the University of Southern California main campus, located seven miles from the health sciences campus, and with students from other nearby colleges. The effects of commuting to work or changing class schedules frequently require students to terminate after short periods of employment. Consequently, the Loan Services supervisor is forced to train approximately twenty shelvers each year.

Shelver Training

The supervisor is faced with the problem of repeating a considerable amount of information regarding the location and arrangement of library materials when training each shelver. To reduce this time-consuming repetition and to present basic information in an interesting manner, the supervisor developed an audiovisual program for the training of shelvers.

The instructional program consists of colored 35 mm. slides accompanied by a written script. This format was chosen over audiotape, filmstrip, or another medium because of the ease with which the program may be updated and altered. As the location or arrangement of the library's material changes, it is necessary only to rewrite portions of the script and replace any outdated slides.

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Before a shelver begins to view the training program, he is given a tour of the library. Once he is somewhat familiar with its layout, the slides dealing with the location of various library materials become more meaningful to him.

The training program may be viewed by one student or, when more than one person is being trained, by a group. When the program is used by only one person, he reads the script to himself while viewing the slides and advances the projector to the next slide when the script so indicates. During group viewing, one person acts as moderator, reading the script aloud and advancing the slides.

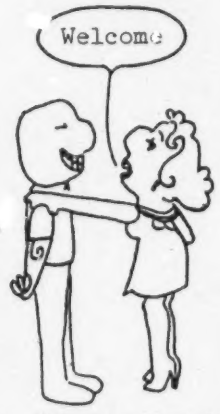

FIG. 1.—Welcome to Norris Library.

Cartoon illustrations have been integrated into the slide portion of the program. These cartoons add variety and humor while stressing points discussed in the script.

This slide/script presentation is followed by a series of overhead projector transparencies which are usually shown by the supervisor. Using a grease pencil, she is able to demonstrate the proper use of assignment sheet forms described in the script. Other transparencies emphasize some of the more complex shelving rules and give the supervisor a basis for discussing and clarifying these principles.

TRAINING PROGRAM CONTENT

The slide script program is divided into six sections. Usually the first two segments are viewed at one sitting; the remaining four sections are viewed one at a time. It takes no more than ten minutes to view each section.

The first part of the program, entitled "Welcome," includes nineteen slides and is a general introduction to the library and to shelving. Slides and background information on the li-

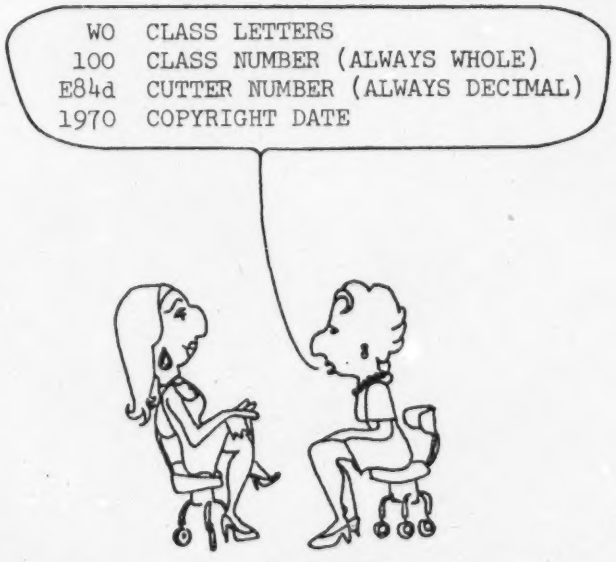

FIG. 2.—Typical National Library of Medicine and Library of Congress call numbers have these four components.

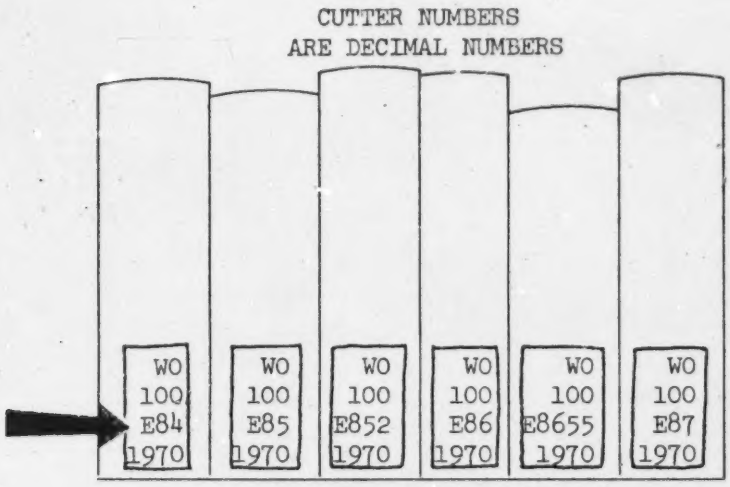

FIG. 3.—Let's examine the order of these call numbers.

FIG. 4.—Bring materials in need of repair to your supervisor's attention.

brary are combined with cartoons and script to acquaint the new employee with work scheduling, assignment of duties, and payroll procedures (see Fig. 1).

Section two, "Shelving Unbound Journals," describes the location of current medical periodicals and their alphabetical arrangement by title. The eleven slides included in this portion illustrate the various rules described in the script. After the trainee has viewed this part of the program, he is asked to arrange a sample of unbound journals in the manner he has just seen described. His work is then checked and any mistakes he has made are discussed with him. The same type of follow-up procedure is used to reinforce the other portions of the program as well.

TABLE 1
SHELVING TIME CALCULATION CHART

Books
- Volume number equations
  - 1 book truck shelf (3 feet) equals 30 books
  - 1 book truck side (3 shelves) equals 90 books
  - 1 sorting shelf equals 25 books
- Sorting time
  - 1 book truck side equals 20 minutes
- Shelving time
  - 105 books equal 60 minutes

Bound Journals
- Volume number equations
  - 1 book truck shelf (3 feet) equals 20 volumes
  - 1 book truck side (3 shelves) equals 60 volumes
  - 1 sorting shelf equals 20 volumes
- Sorting time
  - 1 book truck side equals 15 minutes
- Shelving time
  - 200 volumes equals 60 minutes

Unbound Journals
- Sorting time
  - 110 issues equals 15 minutes
- Shelving time
  - 150 issues equals 40 minutes

Allow approximately 30 minutes for cleanup in each area before and after shelving.

"Shelving Bound Journals" is the third portion of the program and combines fifteen slides of the bound journal area with script instructions on the arrangement of these volumes. As in section two, the slides highlight information essential for shelving in the location described.

Norris Medical Library
Health Sciences Campus
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California

SHELVING
ASSIGNMENT SHEET

Shelver's Name Joe
Date 3/6/75 8hrs

1. Unbound journals (no. and amount of time includes cleaning, sorting, and shelving)
   a. Approx. no. 75
   b. Approx. time allotted 30 min
2. Reference (no. and amount of time includes cleaning, sorting, and shelving)
   a. Approx. no. 70
   b. Approx. time allotted 60 min.
   c. Amount of time for shelf reading Chemical Abstracts, Biological Abstracts, Science Citation Index, Index Medicus 30 min.
3. Bound journals and lower level books (no. and amount of time includes cleaning, sorting, and shelving)
   a. Approx. no. 100
   b. Approx. time allotted 40 min
   c. Amount of time to shelf-read and arrange lower level Index Medicus 5 min.
4. Books (humanities books, magazines, Webb, history of medicine books and journals, regular collection) (no. and amount of time includes cleaning, sorting, and shelving)
   a. Approx. no. 100
   b. Approx. time allotted 80 min.
   c. Amount of time to clean up humanities magazines 10 min.
5. Desk time 6:00 – 7:00
6. Breaks and dinner 15 + 30 + 15 min.
7. Odd Jobs:
   a. Fill coin & xerox machines 4-4:30 p.m.
   b.
   c.
8. Shelf reading: Amount of time 30 min. Range?
9. Last 45 minutes of day: Clean all areas. Leave materials on trucks by sorting shelves. Take items which do not belong in those areas to their proper areas or to the Loan Desk trucks. 45 min

SHELVER COMMENTS

FIG. 5. Sample shelving assignment sheet.

Section four of the program, entitled "Shelving Books," contains twenty-four slides illustrating the location of the current medical texts, and other collections such as humanities, history of medicine, and reference. The trainee learns how to determine in which area a book belongs. As a follow-up to this section, the shelver is sometimes taken on a second tour of the library and once again the various locations discussed in the training program are pointed out to him.

Section five, dealing with "Call Numbers," is the most complicated portion of the series. This section presents a concise explanation of each line of the National Library of Medicine and Library of Congress classification numbers.

Emphasis is placed upon instructing the shelver in the decimal nature of the Cutter number (see Fig. 2).

Transparencies of two of these slides are an important aspect of the follow-up to this segment of the program. These picture a series of correctly arranged call numbers and provide examples which the supervisor and shelver review in detail (see Fig. 3).

After viewing the transparencies, the shelver is asked to arrange a set of books on the monograph sorting shelves. He must separate them according to the part of the Norris collection to which they belong and then arrange the books of each section in call number order.

Two additional means are used for testing the shelver's understanding of call number order. One tool is a set of flash cards, each with a different call number, which the shelver arranges alphanumerically and gives to the supervisor for correction. As another exercise, the trainee shelf-reads several rows of books in the open stacks with the supervisor checking the results.

"Finishing Touches," the last part of the program, uses twenty-three slides to review the information presented in the preceding portions. This section also offers suggestions for ways in which the shelver can demonstrate initiative and become an enthusiastic member of the library staff (see Fig. 4).

Shelver Supervision

A work assignment sheet devised by the Loan Services supervisor is the basis for supervising the shelving staff. This method serves two important purposes. Whether or not the supervisor is present to give instructions, it is a means of communicating assignments to the shelvers. In addition, it enables the supervisor to evaluate the amount of work the shelvers accomplish.

The shelving assignment sheet is divided into categories for bound and unbound journals, monographs, and reference items. It also includes the time allotted for breaks, cleanup or clearing of tables and carrels, and miscellaneous tasks such as shelf-reading.

The supervisor records on this sheet exactly which tasks the shelver should perform during his work period and the approximate amount of time to be devoted to each activity.

The supervisor checks the various areas of the library each day before the shelver's arrival and notes the number of items to be shelved in each location. She then computes the amount of time the shelver should devote to each section by consulting a special shelving time calculation chart devised by the library. This chart includes a number of equations relating books and journals to book trucks and sorting shelves. These equations allow the supervisor to quickly approximate the number of items to be shelved in each section of the library (see Table 1). Another portion of the chart relates the number of book trucks and sorting shelves to shelving time. The chart thus enables the supervisor to quickly prepare the assignment sheet. A sample assignment sheet is shown in Figure 5.

The slide/script training program has served as an educational tool and a time-saving device for the Loan Services supervisor. Feedback received from employees trained by this technique has been positive and shelvers report the program is both informative and interesting. The shelving time calculation chart has aided the supervisor in giving realistic shelving assignments, and the work assignment sheet has enabled her to give the shelvers a clear understanding of their tasks without having to give shelving instructions orally. These methods for the training and supervision of shelvers have proved to be both effective and efficient. Similar training and supervisory devices may have application for other libraries of all sizes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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